

Connecting Children's eCulture to Curriculum: Implications for Educators

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This article discusses the benefits of including "children's eCulture" in school curricula. "Children's eCulture" is the culture of children as it relates to electronics and technology. Integrating children's eCulture into formal learning experiences allows teachers to promote multiple literacies in their students. The article reviews literature in this field to: (a) describe the recreational uses of technology by children; (b) link these applications to school curricula; (c) familiarize educators with children's eCulture as a means for promoting multiple literacies across the curriculum; and (d) discuss the need to integrate children's eCulture in teacher education programs.

An Internet search for the key word "electronic" yields many hits. Descriptions of the web sites that use this key word often incorporate a shortened version of "electronic" by simply writing "e" in front of the word that is being described; for example, e-democracy, e-government, and e-values (Lawday, 2003). Kanter (2001) explained that eCulture "defines the human side of the global information era" (p. 6). Further, she noted that it "derives from basic principles of community: shared identity, sharing of knowledge, and multiple contributions" (p. 8). Electronic culture is manifested in everyday electronic media, from television and video, to computers (Davies, 2003).

Historically, eCulture is related to the term, "cyberculture," that was widely used in the 1990s and is defined by Bell (2007) as "a way of think-

ing about how people and digital technologies interact, how we *live together*" and the "ways of life shaped by cyberspace, where cyberspace is a matrix of embedded practices and representations" (p. 5). Bell (2001) also explained that cyberspace is both a product of and producer of culture; it is at the heart of social, economic, political, and cultural processes. A similar term, "digital culture," refers to an "emerging value system and set of expectations as particularly expressed in the activities of news and information media makers and users online" (Deuze, 2006, p. 63). The "truths" of e-culture, as explained by Kanter (2001) include: (a) it is about dramatic change; (b) mistakes are visible and magnified; (c) communication is the core; (d) it promotes collaboration; (e) it involves emergent strategies; (f) it is full of paradoxes; and (g) it can be fun.

From the perspectives of parents, teachers, and casual observers, it is apparent that the culture of children has taken on this "electronic" twist. Since culture is defined as "the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.), children's use of electronics is one strand that is woven into their culture; thus, the term "children's eCulture." The importance of technology in this electronic world of children is obvious when one observes children using computers, exchanging emails, instant messaging (IM), texting on cell phones, and playing online video games. As Davies (2003) stated, "The iconic, visual nature of our electronic culture makes it particularly accessible to even the smallest of children; thus even the youngest of students become disciples" (p. xiv).

The purpose of this article is to examine components of "children's eCulture," by reviewing literature that describes the components of children's eCulture, and promote its inclusion in school curricula to enhance learning. "Children's eCulture" is viewed as an extension of the wider body of existing work on eCulture. One example being Juan Gilbert's targeted integration of information technology into the African American culture (Roach, 2001). The general topic of eCulture is applied to the culture of children. After introducing the concept of children's eCulture, the article will describe common recreational uses of technology by children and connect these uses to learning experiences in formal school settings. Finally, the article will describe the importance of preparing teachers who are ready to capitalize on children's eCulture by integrating this concept into formal learning experiences.

CHILDREN, CULTURE, AND eCULTURE

Stemming from the impact that the microchip has made on revolutionizing communication technology, a new, electronic culture has arrived (Davies, 2003). "It would be difficult to refute the suggestion that technological change has been *the* major force for cultural change for at least a century" (Penny, 1995, p. 1). This new step in culture is the computer culture, which is an emerging culture that calls for a change in thinking (Leopoldseder, 1999).

The idea of "children's eCulture" stems from the blending of the broader areas of electronic culture, children's culture, and African-American eCulture. First, electronic culture has been referred to as a "matrix," in which "the archive of visual and aural mechanical and electronic recordings amount to our cultural memory" (Morse, 1998, p. 4). Second, children's culture is defined by Henry Jenkins (2008), a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as "the popular culture produced for, by, and/or about children" (§1). Third, eCulture is a term that is also connected to Juan E. Gilbert's work in instructional technology, which was influential in the development of the Institute for African American ECulture [iAAEC] (Roach, 2001). According to Roach, the iAAEC is comprised "of African American computer scientists, social scientists, educators and entrepreneurs who are dedicated to establishing electronic culture in the African American community" (p. 42). Roach's interview with Dr. Roscoe Giles, executive director of the iAAEC explains that "the work of scientists, like Gilbert, is critical to iAAEC because it creates culture-specific technology, which is adaptable by African-Americans" (p. 42).

One strand that is woven into children's culture is the use of electronics; thus the term "eCulture." Blending the concepts of children's culture and eCulture provides a definition of children's eCulture, which is the culture of children as it relates to electronics and technology. Children's eCulture extends beyond the traditional uses of technology in academic settings to recreational uses that include but are not limited to: instant messaging, blogging, text messaging, using cell phones, playing with electronic toys and video games, and using digital cameras. Technology is part of the social and academic lives of our students (Lacina, 2008). Since children are "awash in electronic media" due to the portability that allows children to be connected virtually anywhere (Roberts & Foehr, 2008, p. 2), educators should capitalize on the pervasive recreational use of technology by integrating it into school curricula.

Integrating children's eCulture into the school curriculum is important because today's students "are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet" (Prensky, 2001a, p. 1). Prensky referred to today's students, who represent the first generations to grow up with digital technology, as "digital natives" (p. 1). In contrast, those who were not born into the digital world are termed "digital immigrants" (p. 2). Prensky asserted that: "Digital Immigrant teachers assume that learners are the same as they have always been, and that the same methods that worked for the teachers when they were students will work for students now. *But that assumption is no longer valid*" (p. 3).

Additionally, Prensky (2001b) presented evidence that digital natives think differently than digital immigrants. Prensky explained, "The environment and culture in which people are raised affects and even determines many of their thought processes" (p. 3). Jenkins (2007) extended the conversation about digital natives and immigrants by stating concerns about Prensky's metaphor. For example, a divide is created when digital natives and immigrants are viewed as distinct entities determined by when they were born. He explained that this view limits the kinds of sharing between adults and children and influences the types of interactions that they have outside of these cultural divides. Jenkins' work supports educators as they think about what it means to learn in a participatory culture and consider the kinds of knowledge gained in an informal online world. With this information in mind, the discussion will now turn to the need for establishing a link between children's eCulture and the school curriculum.

LINKING CHILDREN'S eCULTURE TO CURRICULUM

This section elaborates on the link between eCulture and curriculum to promote an awareness of the ways in which children's eCulture enhances the development of multiple literacies across the curriculum. The term, multiple literacies, refers to "visual, electronic, and digital forms of expression" (Hobbs, 2008, p. 239). While multiple literacies may be developed in the traditional academic uses of technology, integrating children's eCulture is another important consideration. Research in the primary grades suggests that computers support literacy development in a generative way (Labbo, 2006). Labbo differentiates between formal and informal literacies when referring to new electronic literacy genres. Informal types include emails, chat rooms, discussion boards, and video conferences; and formal types include web site design, PowerPoint presentations, and multimedia video compilations.

Clifford (2005) noted that “many young people spend a lot of time on-line and gaming, yet educators have very little understanding of the intellectual skills they actually use there” (p. 15). Further, he advised that “we need to think more deeply about the growing gap between the lives that children and youth lead outside school and the ones that are available to them within its walls” (p. 16). Linking children's eCulture and curriculum is important because children “spend more time with media than any single activity other than sleeping, with the average American eight- to eighteen-year-old reporting more than six hours of daily media use” (Roberts & Foehr, 2008, p. 1). The media use described by Roberts and Foehr includes television, video players, audio media, video games, computers, cell phones, personal digital media players, personal digital assistants, and handheld internet devices. Prensky (2008b) noted that when children go to school, their electronic connections to the world are left behind and replaced by outdated equipment. This observation may be linked to a “back to the basics” view of teaching and learning. The accounts presented in the edited book, *Electronic Culture*, (Druckrey, 1996) question certain cultural dreams and embrace others; these questions are described as either repressive or liberating (Stone, 1996). What is valued in the school curriculum relates to the variety of stakeholders' beliefs about learning and pedagogy.

eCULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS

The abundance of visual images associated with technology has sparked concerns from critics who fear that creativity may be destroyed and that the written word may be replaced (Davies, 2003). Contrary to this line of thinking however, are the multitude of opportunities that now exist by incorporating technology and children's eCulture into school settings. Learning opportunities that capitalize on children's eCulture begin before the formal school day commences, as was done in one technological education program that provided iPods and laptops for students to use during a lengthy commute to school (Millman, 2007). As portable media players, iPods allow students to “listen to, or view through an online video, a podcast” (Lacina, 2008, p. 247). Lacina also explained that iPods support the language acquisition of second language learners.

Once students arrive at school, teachers have several options for integrating children's eCulture into the curriculum. Computers may be used for research and communication; thus building a variety of academic and social skills that include gathering, sorting, synthesizing, evaluating, and reporting

for real reasons (Scala & Schroder, 1997). According to Scala and Schroder, authentic purposes for projects that enhance these skills validate writing, reading, and communication activities. An example that illustrates how multiple literacies are developed is shown in the podcasts that were created and published by fourth-grade students in their study of 17th century Jamestown, Virginia (Long, 2007). Long explained that the history curriculum is enhanced with technology by developing skills typically associated with broadcasting, such as “writing, editing, oral presentation, and technology work” (p. 39). This example underscores the importance of having an authentic audience to enhance children’s communication skills.

A benefit of connecting children’s eCulture to curriculum is shown in the rich social and collaborative contexts that are nurtured. For example, third and fourth grade students in two schools collaborated to create podcasts of poems that they wrote and illustrated (Dlott, 2007). When children write for an audience and view their writing as purposeful, it motivates them to continue writing. “In contrast to pencil-and-paper writing activities, students enthusiastically reworked their ideas to help their virtual partners grasp the ideas they wanted to communicate” (Boling, Castek, Zawilinski, Barton, & Nierlich, 2008, p. 506). Boling et al. engaged their students in an Internet-based research project that both increased their knowledge of national parks and enhanced their technology skills. The project targeted social studies and language arts standards as the students created wiki pages to share their work. The project promoted collaboration as the students shared strategies for accomplishing new tasks with each other, demonstrating that they possess more knowledge about the Internet that the teachers have not yet acquired. Dlott found that the revisions her students made for their scripts improved both their writing and listening skills. She used a blog, which is a “Web site about some topic or issue; visitors to the site can share comments on that topic” (p. 80). In addition to providing an audience for students’ work, the use of a blog provides a forum for receiving feedback. The comments posted on Dlott’s site provide evidence of the excitement felt by the students and parents who viewed the work that was posted there.

The use of laptop computers has changed both teaching and learning, according to Furger (2001), who described how laptops are being successfully used at the Mott Hall School. Mott Hall, according to Furger, is a magnet school for math, science, and technology in New York Community School District Six. Middle school students at Mott Hall are using laptops to complete a variety of interdisciplinary projects, such as the study of methane gas emissions. The standards-based project approach enables teachers at Mott Hall to use digital portfolios and rubrics to assess student learning.

The profound cultural implications related to the visual aspect of electronic culture is shown in the access that children have to knowledge, when compared to print versions of similar content that could be inaccessible (Davies, 2003). For example, Davies explained that the television makes available information that was once kept private. "The ubiquity of the electronic culture curtails control and amplifies its accessibility. The electronic culture is everywhere" (p. 77). While this view is taken by some as being problematic, it also presents an opportunity for educators. Children's eCulture is a natural stepping stone for teachers to build connections between print-based text and electronic composition and illustration.

An example that shows this natural connection is evident in the shared writing experiences which use computers as the composition medium. This approach has been found to be successful due to the collaborative and social support available to the students. The use of technology to enhance writing experiences is evident in the D-LEA (Digital-Language Experience Approach), which enables children to use a computer to collaboratively revise, edit, and publish their stories for audiences to enjoy (Labbo, Eakle, & Montero, 2002; Laverick, Heider, & Gay, 2008). Similarly, wiki web sites "make it easy to share resources, write collaboratively, and dialogue about the process" (Boling et al., 2008, p. 506). Boling and colleagues explained that language arts and social studies standards are targeted by using the Internet to conduct research on national parks, creating a wiki page about parks, and writing a persuasive piece to convince an exchange student to visit one of the parks.

ELECTRONIC PLAY

In addition to the use of computers to promote multiple literacies and content-specific skills, the application of skills and creative thinking are two other areas that are also enhanced through electronic play. One example is shown in a line of stuffed animals that children use to log on to an internet site to conduct virtual play (Ganz, 2007). Higher order thinking skills are developed as children engage in a variety of activities. According to Ganz, logging on with a secret code allows the user to care for a virtual pet, spend virtual play money, and play games. A link on the home page allows users to locate stores internationally that sell the toys. One parent's observation of her daughter's play at this site included calculating money for virtual purchases for her pet, playing an online game of checkers with her friend, sending and receiving mail, and chatting with her friend as she played. The

popularity of these toys is illustrated by another child who gave her fourth-grade teacher one as a Christmas gift. This teacher's connection to children's eCulture is clearly evident in the value that the teacher places on knowing her students' recreational interests outside the classroom. The child wanted to share her eCulture with a valued person in her life, her teacher.

The child who was engaged in the virtual play session described was also talking on a cell phone during her time on the computer. This ability to multi-task is known as "media multitasking" (Jacobs, 2006; Roberts & Foehr, 2008, p. 9). Media multitasking is a feat that should cause teachers to: (a) develop an awareness about the types of activities in which their students are engaged outside of school and (b) capitalize on the types of activities that their students find motivating and engaging by building learning experiences that relate to these activities. On an international level, the possibilities for building social learning contexts are endless.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

From sending emails and instant messaging on computers to sending text messages on cell phones, these types of technology use represent another area of children's eCulture. A study by NOP World reported that 40% of children ages 12-14 own their own cell phones (Marek, 2005), while another source reports that 39% of children 8-18 years have their own cell phone (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005; Roberts & Foehr, 2008). With MP3 and camera capabilities, this form of technology is a vital part of children's eCulture. It is advised that children use cell phones that block calls from unrecognized numbers to protect them from harmful influences (Keiter, 2007). Another danger associated with cellular phones, and other technologies associated with modern life, is exposure to electromagnetic radiation (Kovach, 2007). Kovach advised that to help prevent the array of potential health risks, cell phones should be held at a safe distance from the body.

One way that the camera feature on cell phones may be used to enhance learning experiences is to encourage students to capture images of events or objects that they would like to preserve for future study. For example, when a child is considering a topic for a writing project, he or she could use pictures and videos from the environment as a data-collection technique that lends itself as a springboard for the project. Cell phones, which have the ability to empower teachers, have been labeled as the future of education (Prensky, 2003).

Instead of viewing text messaging and IM as detrimental to learning, these applications can promote literacy skills (Sternberg, Kaplan, & Borck, 2007). Further, using computer-mediated discussions of classroom writing and reading can be useful (Lewis & Fabos, 2005). These discussions engage children in three roles, described by Jacobs (2006) as text producer, consumer, and distributor. "Participation in digital literacies such as instant messaging has implications for how wired youth are being prepared for participation in today's society" (Jacobs, p. 1). When children send and receive text messages, they are communicating in a way that is different from the standard, formal language taught in schools. For example, when a mother sent a text message to ask her son a question, he responded with "IDK." The context of the message and response allowed the mother to comprehend the message as, "I don't know." What implications does this form of children's eCulture have on formal learning situations? First, consider the explanation of "squeeze-text" shared by Carrington (2004):

Squeeze-text shortens text to the minimum syllable length, usually with the removal of vowels which means, for example, that 'don't' becomes DNT. Articles and conjunctions such as 'the' and 'and' are often dropped and common phrases become acronyms. (p. 3)

When children use squeeze text, they are thinking creatively to express themselves in the shortest possible form. The mother mentioned above asked her son how he knows what the abbreviations are that he receives in his messages. His response was that he usually just knows and if he doesn't know, then he asks. This type of activity promotes the use of context clues; also the use of the "Word" function during text messaging can help children with viewing the conventional spellings of many words. For example, as a word is being typed, the messaging program anticipates what the word will be, which then encourages the user to select the accurate one.

Second, it is useful for educators to consider how the use of IM results in a type of codeswitching. Research conducted by Jones (2007) described the instant messaging practices used by 11- to 13-year old Welsh-English bilingual girls, which resulted in a type of codeswitching between both languages. This process of codeswitching could be applied to switching between two codes of communication, Standard English, as in the case previously illustrated, and "squeeze-text" (Carrington, 2004, p. 3). If the mother did not understand "IDK" based on the context of the message, then the son

would have used the standard written version of “I don’t know.” This assumption leads to the last point regarding the use of IM as a form of children’s eCulture and its impact on learning. Lee (2007) noted that “text-making practices in IM are shaped by the perceived affordances of resources, that is, people’s perceptions of the possibilities and constraints offered by the resources (e.g., languages and writing systems) available to them” (p. 245-246). When time is of concern, the shortened form of communication helps the person sending the text by shortening the form of the words chosen for use.

The positive outcomes of using squeeze text may be overshadowed by the concerns, such as teachers who believe that IM is negatively affecting children’s ability to spell (Alexander, 2006). There is a concern that the quality of writing “is being degraded by their electronic communication, with its carefree spelling, lax punctuation and grammar, and its acronym shortcuts” (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008, p. i). Yet, consider the previously-discussed loss of control that adults may experience when electronic media promotes access to formerly inaccessible knowledge. Is the concern related to the “perceived move from traditional *print* literacies to *electronic* literacies;” from the stability of the printed word to the ephemerality of digital communication (Alexander, 2006, p. 37)? Is the underlying issue really related to the increased use among e-connected youth of email, the Web, chatrooms, and IM, signaling “a range of communication that many adults can’t always control,” thus, find threatening? (p. 36).

Research conducted by Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, and Macgill (2008) found that teens spend a considerable amount of time composing texts but they do not think that electronically composed material is real writing. The teens in this study generally do not believe that technology negatively influences the quality of their writing. Further, their parents are more positive about the influence of computers and text-based communication tools on their children’s writing. Connecting children’s eCulture to the formal school curriculum helps to bridge this gap.

TELEVISION AND VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

Television and video are used in both recreational and academic settings. “The computer game industry has a large impact on our culture...it is the fastest growing entertainment industry” (Raessens, 2006, p. 53). In the school curriculum, teachers may argue that “video games could not possibly contribute to our understandings about learning” (Compton-Lilly, 2007, p.

725). It has been noted that although “the amount of time children spend viewing film and television programs has always been a controversial issue, learning can result when this media is used to promote literacy” (Hoffner, Baker, & Quinn, 2008, p. 579). Video games are an imposing force in children's eCulture. For example, while observing a child play in an online battle, the observer noticed that he was engaged in a simulated experience in which he was wearing a wireless earpiece that allowed him to talk with the other online players about their game. Additionally, the child was also sending and receiving text messages on his cell phone, another example of the media multitasking described by Roberts and Foehr (2008). Jacobs (2006) acknowledged that a multitasking activity such as this example might be perceived as characteristic of teenagers—fragmented and lacking focus. Based on his own and similar example of multitasking, he argued that the multitasking activities are both coherent and contextualized within the teen's life. Further, he posited that as the teen “multitasked during the instant messaging session, she participated in several text roles that have contributed to her construction of a portfolio or collection of attributes, achievements, and skills” (p. 172). When determining how much time is spent using media, it is important to differentiate and count each medium (Roberts & Foehr). Relating the previous example, therefore, would involve three times the amount of use due to the three different media being used.

Despite concerns about violent and sexist content, along with the simplification of reality that they may produce (Clifford, 2005; Gros, 2007), it is also believed that “videogames are useful instruments for learning specific strategies and for acquiring knowledge; they also develop the learning that is characteristic of the culture of the information society, and this learning is likely to have long-term consequences” (Gros, p. 6). Computer games and the new literacies created by such have produced “significant changes which cannot but impact on the kinds of embodied knowledge and practices that young people bring to all social contexts, including classrooms” (Carington, 2004, p. 6). The ways in which learning is enhanced, according to Compton-Lilly (2007) relate to the active involvement of the learner; skill practice in meaningful and engaging contexts; and the use of media that is multimodal. Compton-Lilly explained that if we want to understand learning, then video games can be our teachers. She describes video games as “being extremely successful in teaching children” and “demonstrate that combining learning principles to support children as learners is possible and results in learning that is enjoyable and fulfilling” (p. 726).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Connecting children's eCulture to academic settings has implications for teacher education programs. One challenge that may be encountered relates to having students who "come with a wealth of skills in using technology in their own lives, both personal and professional, while others have limited experience and a fair amount of fear and reticence" (Murphy, DePasquale, & McNamara, 2003, p. 12). Thus, it is necessary to assess students' needs and plan accordingly. Doing so will ultimately benefit children because as Clifford (2005) cautioned, schools are only one of cyberkids' learning environments and while they have to go there, they actually *choose* [italics added] to go to digital environments; additionally, educators aren't using technology the way their students are using it outside of school. Another challenge relates to the boredom that today's students are likely to experience in traditional lecture-style teaching practices when compared to their media-saturated and tech-driven world (Prensky, 2008c). Prensky stressed the need to have student input into both the structure and substance of their education.

Inclusion of the eCulture concept in teacher education programs offers a pragmatic approach to preparing novice teachers for developing their students' proficiency with multiple literacies. Further, educators should be responsive to children's eCulture as they design lesson plans. This process starts in teacher education programs. Gros (2007) advised that there is a need to "change our teaching methods to enhance the skills that future citizens will need in a digital society" (p. 23). This concept is important in light of the previous discussion on the ephemerality of technology. In 2002, Lovink predicted:

Soon the Internet will not be new anymore. Email is becoming a part of everyday life, as did television, the vacuum cleaner, and the refrigerator...Instead of taking a cynical stand...the proposal is made to develop a reflexive theory. An open discourse, able to incorporate a wide range of experiences, beyond the good, the bad, and the ugly, expressing an engaged environment which is both keen to further development [of] technology (standards) while fully aware this process is happening within society with all its layers of social, economic, gender, and race relations. (p. 6)

Teacher education should support the need for educators to be adaptive to new contexts for learning, with inclusion of children's eCulture in the curriculum as key. Educators at all levels should consider Jenkins' (2006) description of convergence culture, "where old and new media collide" (p. 2), the way in which media is produced and consumed.

One such context is the use of videogames in the teacher education curriculum. Gros (2007) explained that the "design of a learning environment built on the educational properties of games can be an appropriate way to improve learning" (p. 23). Within the teacher education program, it would be helpful to include content on the use of videogames to address the difficulties that Gros explained teachers face, that is, identifying how the game is relevant to the curriculum and the appropriateness of the content of the game. Yet the challenge for educators goes beyond selecting the right game, according to Twist and Withers (2007). It is the necessity for ensuring that "every young person, regardless of background and socioeconomic position, can access the skills and knowledge to be full participants in networked cultures" (p. 37). Programming should be considered as another topic for inclusion in teacher preparation programs. Prensky (2008a) views programming as the new literacy and what he believes will define a literate person in the 21st century. Programming, he explains, is the ability to make digital technology do what one wants it to do; to fit one's needs, purposes, and will.

Summarizing her research on preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences regarding the use of popular culture in the primary literacy curriculum, Marsh (2006) cautioned:

If we do not ensure that preservice teachers are aware of the realities of children's out-of-school literacy lives, shaped as these are by popular culture, media, and new technologies, then we are likely to continue to have literacy curricula in the international arena that are anachronistic and inadequate in terms of their ability to address the complex economic, social, and cultural demands of the 21st century. (p. 175)

Based on their study of the use of PDAs in physical education, McCaughtry and Dillon (2008) strongly recommended the inclusion of technology during field experiences. Further, as preservice teachers become immersed in field experiences, their awareness of children's eCulture may influence (and also become influenced by) their mentor teachers' beliefs and practices involving the place of technology in the curriculum. Prensky (2005/2006)

advised that educators may need to abandon their predigital instincts and move out of their comfort zones. Preservice teachers who have been prepared for incorporating children's eCulture into the school curriculum have the potential to impact veteran teachers in this area. Doing so is a step toward addressing the "the divergence between how young people have adopted and use digital media technology and devices, and what those in authority...allow or wish young children would do under their 'watch'" (Twist & Withers, 2007, p. 36). The key, according to Prensky (2007), is to include students in the education process by establishing a "useful division of labor" around the emerging technologies (p. 42). In other words, it is a shared learning process between teachers and students as they learn from one another.

CONCLUSION

It is critical that teachers become prepared to promote the development of multiple literacies in their students and the integration of children's eCulture into school curricula is a step in that direction. This article describes eCulture as an important link between the recreational use of technology and its potential to promote learning in formal academic settings. Compton-Lilly (2007) described the need for teachers to have time and resources to become knowledgeable about their students' interests and experiences, so that these two areas are reflected in the classroom. Specifically, Compton-Lilly stressed the need to provide children with resources that build upon the identities and interests children bring and the use of materials that suggest a vast range of issues, cultures, media resources, and ages. Incorporating eCulture into school curricula fosters the development of multi-literacies, which "reflect sociocultural learning theories. These theories recognize that learning—more specifically—literacy learning, does not occur separately from other aspects of our lives" (Compton-Lilly, p. 718).

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